

WASHINGTON—Today, U.S. Rep. Ed Pastor, D-Ariz., voted to stand with American families and extend unemployment benefits for millions of Americans who have earned them through a lifetime of work and lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Republicans in the Senate blocked these benefits for more than seven weeks, causing 2.5 million American families to lose the benefits they earned, including 62,500 Arizonans, according to figures from the House Ways and Means Committee. The benefits are a proven boost to the American economy, shown by economists to create jobs as families spend into the economy.

“Never before has America turned its back on millions of American families as they struggled to make ends meet with this level of unemployment,” Pastor said Thursday. “Yet the same Republicans, who want to increase our deficit by extending massive tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans, were willing to leave average Americans to fend for themselves and vote against a proven job-creation measure. I am proud to stand up for our economy and for American families and make sure they have the unemployment benefits they’ve worked so hard to earn.”

The bill extends the Emergency Unemployment Compensation and Extended Benefits programs through Nov. 30, 2010, and retroactively restores benefits to some people who lost theirs. Pastor said his offices receive dozens of phone calls each day from anxious constituents who are desperately trying to make ends meet. Many of them had been working, then were laid off and have spent all their savings and resources while they looked for another job.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, extending unemployment benefits is not only good for the unemployed; it is also one of the best and fastest ways to stimulate the economy. Unemployment benefits were responsible for creating more than one million jobs since the recession started, and adding almost two percent to the gross domestic product, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

“Congressional Republicans are committed to continuing the Bush policies that brought our economy to its knees,” Pastor said. “The best way to help the American economy is to keep people on their feet while we continue working to create American jobs.”

